
PARISH

Reparations Symposium

Members of St. Luke's attended EDOW's Reparations Symposium on October 1st at Calvary Episcopal Church in DC. The day began with a keynote address from the Rev. Dr. Kelly Brown Douglas, Canon Theologian at Washington National Cathedral and Dean of Episcopal Divinity School at Union Theological Seminary in New York City. Rev. Dr. Brown's address stressed that the legacy of slavery is the archetype for white supremacy as it has expressed itself as racialized economic injustice. While sharing examples of this injustice, including redlining and racial covenants designed to keep black communities in less desirable neighborhoods and from accumulating generational wealth, as well as the ongoing legacy of these past practices, such as the wealth disparity between black and white Americans, Rev. Dr. Brown also discussed the theological implications of white supremacy in the United States. Most disheartening were statistics like less than 40% of white Christians believing that the legacy of slavery plays a role in the United States today. Rev. Dr. Brown's keynote also stressed that just as we are called to repair the breach for the sins of the past, we are also called to repair the breach between our unjust present and God's just future. Symposium attendees were reminded that this call is the Good News of the Gospels, and that social justice is intrinsic to our identity as Christians.

Episcopal Diocese
of Washington



The symposium also featured testimony from churches in the diocese where the work of discovering ties to wealth generated from slavery has begun. This included testimony from churches in our diocese that were established and supported from wealth built off of slavery, and black churches who were directly cut off from the benefits of that wealth. One of the testimonies came from St. John's Norwood, the congregation out of which St. Luke's grew. The research from St. John's Norwood showed, from writings from past rectors of the church, that the founders of the congregation were all enslavers, as well as extremely racist and bigoted. This testimony also featured a report from Franklin A. Robinson, Jr, an archivist who has been researching the eight root parishes that formed the diocese. His research focused on the years 1692-1864 to see their connections to wealth accumulated through slavery. While his research is still ongoing, he has already found instances of vestrymen and priests owning slaves during this time. These research findings also included proof of a parish, William and Mary Parish, Charles County, selling slaves in its possession and using the money gained from the sale for the use and benefit of the parish. It is important to remember that regardless of whether a member of any given parish owned enslaved people, everyone participated in an economy supported in part by enslaved labor.

The symposium provided attendees with the opportunity to learn more about EDOW's Reparations Taskforce, as well as play a part in laying groundwork for a resolution at the 2023 Diocesan Convention publicly acknowledging the harm discussed at the symposium. Attendees also engaged in meaningful and sacred discussion about what reparations could look like in our diocese, questions about the process, and areas for further discussion and learning. Attendees from St. Luke's left the symposium with a new perspective on the Diocese's connection to slavery, and eager to continue the conversation. A copy of the recording of the symposium is available for anyone who would like to view it. While the topics covered in the symposium are painful, we cannot atone for the harm already done if we do not name it.

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